

# THE LAST SHOT

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By FREDERICK PALMER



### SYNOPSIS.

**CHAPTER I**—At their home on the frontier between the Browns and Grays, Marta Gelland and her mother, entertaining Colonel Westerling of the Grays, see Captain Lanström, staff intelligence officer of the Browns, injured by a fall in his aeroplane.

**CHAPTER II**—Ten years later, Westerling, nominal chief but real chief of staff, reinforces South La Tir, meditates on war, and speculates on the comparative ages of himself and Marta, who is visiting in the Gray capital.

**CHAPTER III**—Westerling calls on Marta. She tells him of her teaching children the follies of war and martial patriotism, begs him to prevent war while he is chief of staff, and predicts that if he makes war against the Browns he will not win.

**CHAPTER IV**—On the march with the 5th of the Browns Private Stransky, anarchist, deserters war and played-out patriotism and is placed under arrest. Colonel Lanström overhearing, begs him of saying the anarchist will fight well when enraged and is "all man."

**CHAPTER V**—Lanström calls on Marta at her home. He talks with Feller, the gardener. Marta tells Lanström that she believes Feller to be a spy. Lanström confesses it is true.

**CHAPTER VI**—Lanström shows Marta a telephone which Feller has concealed in a secret passage under the tower for use to benefit the Browns in war emergencies, pointing out its value as being in the center of the fighting zone in case of war. Marta consents for it and Feller to remain for the present. Lanström declares his love for Marta.

**CHAPTER VII**—Westerling and the Gray premier plan to use a trivial international affair to foment warlike patriotism in army and people and strike before declaring war. Partow, Brown chief of staff, and Lanström, made vice, discuss the trouble, and the Brown defenses. Partow reveals his plans to Lanström.

**CHAPTER VIII**—At the frontier the two armies lie crouched for attack and defense. In the town with the non-combatants fleeing from the danger zone, Marta hears her child pupils recite the peace oath.

**CHAPTER IX**—The Gray army crosses the border line and attacks. The Browns check them. Artillery, infantry, aeroplanes and dirigibles engage. Stransky, rising to make the anarchist speech of his life, draws the Gray artillery fire. Nickered by a shrapnel splinter he goes Berserk and fights—"all a man."

**CHAPTER X**—Marta has her first glimpse of war in its modern, cold, scientific, murderous, brutality. She allows the secret telephone to remain.

**CHAPTER XI**—The Browns fall back to the Gelland house. Stransky forages. Marta sees a night attack.

**CHAPTER XII**—The Grays attack in force. The call of the fight too strong for Feller, he leaves his secret telephone and goes back to his gun. Hand to hand fighting. The Browns fall back again.

**CHAPTER XIII**—Marta asks Lanström over the secret telephone to appeal to Partow to stop the fighting. Vandalism by Gray soldiers in the Gelland house which Marta is bottled. She makes Westerling's headquarters.

**CHAPTER XIV**—Westerling and his staff occupy the Gelland house. At tea with Marta, Westerling begins to woo her, disclosing his selfish ambitions. Marta, apparently throws her fortunes with the Grays and offers to give valuable information.

need of one. The wire seemed to quiver with the militant tension of her spirit. It was Marta afame who was talking at the other end; not affame for him, but with a purpose that revealed all the latent strength of her personality and daring.

"I shall have to ask Partow. It's a pretty big thing."

"Yes—only that is not all my plan, my little plan. After they have taken the first line of defense—and they will get it, won't they?"

"Yes, we shall yield in the end, yield rather than suffer too great losses there that will weaken the defense on the main line."

"Then I want to know where it is that you want Westerling to attack on the main line, so that we can get him to attack there. That—that will help, won't it?"

"Of course, all the while I shall be getting news from him—when I have proved my loyalty and have his complete confidence—and I'll telephone it to you. I am sure I can get something worth while with you to direct me; don't you think so, Lanny?"

"The wire, Lanny. Ask Partow!" she concluded. Of the two she was the steadier.

"Well," said Partow, looking up at the sound of Lanström's step. Then he half raised himself from his chair at sight of a Lanström with eyes in a gaze of brilliancy; a Lanström with his maimed hand twitching in an outstretched gesture; a Lanström in the dilemma of being at the same time lover and chief of intelligence. Should he let her make the sacrifice of everything that he held to be sacred to a woman's delicacy? Should he not return to the telephone and tell her that he would not permit her to play such a part? Partow's voice cut in on his demoralization with the sharpness of a blade.

"Well, what, man, what?" he demanded. He feared that the girl might be dead. Anything that could upset Lanström in this fashion struck a chord of sympathy and apprehension.

Lanström advanced to the table, pressed his hands on the edge, and, now master of himself, began an account of Marta's offer. Partow's formless arms lay inert on the table, his soft, pudgy fingers outspread on the map and his bulk settled deep in the chair, while his eagle eyes were seeing through Lanström, through a mountain range, into the eyes of a woman and a general on the veranda of an enemy's headquarters. The plan meant giving, giving in the hope of receiving

much in return. Would he get the return?

"A woman was the ideal one for the task we intrusted to Feller," he mused, "a gentlewoman, big enough, adroit enough, with her soul in the work as no paid woman's could be! There seemed no such one in the world!"

"But to let her do it!" gasped Lanström.

"It is her suggestion, not yours? She offers herself? She wants no persuasion?" Partow asked sharply.

"Entirely her suggestion," said Lanström. "She offers herself for her country—for the cause for which our soldiers will give their lives by the thousands. It is a time of sacrifice."

Partow raised his arms. They were not formless as he brought them down with sledge-hammer force to the table.

"Later, I came upon them unexpectedly after they had returned," she went on. "They were sitting there on that seat concealed by the shrubbery. I was on the terrace steps unobserved and I couldn't help overhearing them. Their voices grew louder with the interest of their discussion. I caught something about appropriations and aeroplanes and Bordir and Engadir, and saw that Lanström was pleading with his chief. He wanted a sum ap-

propriated for fortifications to be applied to building planes and dirigibles. Finally, Partow consented, and I recall his exact words: 'They're shockingly archaically defended, especially Engadir,' he said, 'but they can wait until we get further appropriations in the fall!'" She was so far under the spell of her own invention that she believed the reality of her words, reflected in her wide-open eyes which seemed to have nothing to hide.

"That is all," she exclaimed with a shudder—"all my eyes-drooping, all my breach of confidence! If—if it"—and her voice trembled with the intensity of the one purpose that was shining with the light of truth through the murk of her deception—"it will only help to end the slaughter!" She held out her hand convulsively in parting as if she would leave the rest with him.

"I think it will," he said soberly. "I think it will prove that you have done a great service," he repeated as he caught both her hands, which were cold from her ordeal. His own were warm with the strong beating of his heart stirred by the promise of what he had just heard. But he did not prolong the grasp. He was as eager to be away to his work as she to be

alone. "I think it will. You will know in the morning," he added. His steps were sturdier than ever in the power of five against three as he started back to the house. When he reached the veranda, Bouchard, the saturnine chief of intelligence, appeared in the doorway of the dining-room; or, rather, reappeared, for he had been standing there throughout the interview of Westerling and Marta, whose heads were just visible, above the terrace wall, to his hawk eyes.

"A little promenade in the open and my mind made up," said Westerling, clapping Bouchard on the shoulder.

"Something about an attack tonight?" asked Bouchard.

"You guess right. Call the others."

Five minutes later he was seated at the head of the dining-room table with his chiefs around him waiting for their chairman to speak. He asked some categorical questions almost perfunctorily, and the answer to each was, "Ready!" with, in some instances, a qualification—the qualification made by regimental and brigade commanders that, though they could take the

position in front of them, the cost would be heavy. Yes, all were willing and ready for the first general assault of the war, but they wanted to state the costs as a matter of professional self-defense.

Westerling could pose when it served his purpose. Now he rose and, going to one of the wall maps, indicated a point with his forefinger.

"If we get that we have the most vital position, haven't we?"

Some uttered a word of assent; some only nodded. A glance or two of curiosity was exchanged. Why should the chief of staff ask so elementary a question? Westerling was not unconscious of the glances or of their meaning. They gave dramatic value to his next remark.

"We are going to mass for our main attack in front at Bordir!"

"But," exclaimed four or five officers at once, "that is the heart of the position! That is—"

"I believe it is weak—that it will fall, and tonight!"

"You have information, then, information that I have not?" asked Bouchard.

"No more than you," replied Westerling. "Not as much if you have anything new."

"Nothing!" admitted Bouchard wryly. He lowered his head under Westerling's penetrating look in the consciousness of failure.

"I am going on a conviction—on putting two and two together!" Westerling announced. "I am going on my experience as a soldier, as a chief of staff. If I am wrong, I take the responsibility. If I am right, Bordir will be ours before morning. It is settled!"

"If you are right, then," exclaimed Turcas—"well, then it's genius or—"

He did not finish the sentence. He had been about to say coincidence; while Westerling knew that if he were right all the rising skepticism in certain quarters, owing to the delay in his program, would be silenced. His prestige would be unassailable.

CHAPTER XVI.  
Marking Time.

Soon after dark the attack began. Flashes from gun mouths and glowing sheets of flame from rifles made ugly revelry, while the beams of search-lights swept hither and thither. This kept up till shortly after midnight, when it died down, and where hell's concert had raged, silent darkness shrouded the hills. Marta knew that Bordir was taken without having to ask Lanström or wait for confirmation from Westerling.

She was seated in the recess of the arbor the next morning, when she heard the approach of those regular, powerful steps whose character had become as distinct to her as those of a member of her own family. Five against three! five against three! they were saying to her; while down the pass road and the castle road ran the stream of wounded from last night's slaughter.

Posted in the drawing-room of the Gelland house were the congratulations of the premier to Westerling, who had come from the atmosphere of a staff that accorded to him a military insight far above the analysis of ordinary standards. But he was too clever a man to vaunt his triumph. He knew how to carry his honors. He accepted success as his due, in a matter-of-course manner that must inspire confidence in further success.

"You were right," he said to Marta easily, pleasantly. "We did it—we did it—we took Bordir with a loss of only twenty thousand men!"

Only twenty thousand! Her revulsion at the bald statement was relieved by the memory of Lanny's word over the telephone after breakfast that the Browns had lost only five thousand. Four to one was a wide ratio, she was thinking.

"Then the end—then peace is so much nearer?" she asked.

"Very much nearer!" he answered earnestly, as he dropped on the bench beside her.

He stretched his arms out on the back of the seat and the relaxed attitude, unusual with him, brought into relief a new trait of which she had been hitherto oblivious. The conqueror had become simply a companionable man. Though he was not sitting close to her, yet, as his eyes met hers, she had a desire to move away which she knew would be unwise to gratify. She was conscious of a certain softening charm, a magnetism that she had sometimes felt in the days—when she first knew him. She realized, too, that then the charm had not been mixed with the indescribable, intimate quality that it held now.

"In the midst of congratulations after the position was taken last night," he declared, "I confess that I was thinking less of success than of its source." He bent on her a look that was warm with gratitude.

She lowered her lashes before it; before gratitude that made her part appear in a fresh angle of misery.

"There seems to be a kind of fatality about our relations," he went on. "I lay awake pondering it last night. His tone held more than gratitude. It had the elation of discovery.

"He is going to make it harder than I ever guessed!" echoed her own thought, in a flutter of confusion.

To be continued  
CANAAN  
Prof. G. C. Wiles of Irwin, Pa., and Jessie Whonetler of Columbus, spent their holiday vacation here with their parents.  
Family gatherings on Xmas day were held at the homes of P. E. Fet-



"I'm Going to Fight For the Browns—For My Home!"



"I'm Going on My Experience as a Soldier."

position in front of them, the cost would be heavy. Yes, all were willing and ready for the first general assault of the war, but they wanted to state the costs as a matter of professional self-defense.

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Fletcher's Yellow Fever Cure  
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- 1/4 lb. 60c Bulk Green Tea .....23c
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- 3 lbs. New Lima Beans .....25c
- 25c Box Best Cocoa .....18c
- 13c can Sweet Peas .....10c
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- Pure Peanut Butter .....15c lb.
- Our cheese to go at .....19c lb.
- Whole Pound Bulk Coconut .....17c
- 3 Big 10c Bread, or 6-5c loaves, 25c
- 3 dozen cookies for .....25c
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- Asparagus Tips .....15c, 20c, 25c can
- 15c Jersey Gloves .....10c

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Frank Snell, I. N. Hawk and F. Clinkers.

Mr. Blough and wife moved from the Taubert farm last week to the Smith farm on the car line at stop 110.

Wm. Marshall and family are visiting at Akron.

A. L. Lehn and wife ate Xmas dinner with their son, Rev. F. Lehn and family at Nankin.

John Oller and wife are entertaining company from Cleveland.

Mrs. Effie Smith of Canton, is visiting at the home of her brother, Arthur Fouch.

Relatives from Medina were entertained at the Bixler home on Sabbath.

Geo. Caskey and family of Wooster, were visitors at the P. E. Fetzer home the past week.

Chas. Snell spent Xmas in Cleveland.

U. A. Russell and son Chas., and Miss Joliff of Wooster, and Miss Esther Bowers of Creston, were guests at the Roy Gruner home over Sabbath.

Vella and Mina Scott attended the wedding anniversary of Chas. Whopsetler and wife near Creston on last Wednesday.

Mr. Lookbaugh of Sterling visited the Ramsier families the first of the week.

Kenneth Miller and wife of Hermandville, were callers at the Scott home recently.

Dr. Geo. Tupper and wife of Cleveland, spent Christmas with J. W. Oiler and family. Duty called the doctor back to the city early Saturday morning, his wife remaining to visit among friends for a week.

The Canaan M. E. church had very fine Xmas exercises and they were enjoyed by a large and appreciative audience.

## New Year's Class, Jan. 4th

The New Year is before you, and can you think of anything that will place you in a better position in a year from now than to start Jan. 4th to get a thorough

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## TEACHERS' EXAMINATIONS

Teachers' examinations are held at Medina on the first Saturday of the month, October, January, April, May, and on the last 7